



STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR
PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

NEWS RELEASE
EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 A.M.
Aug. 15, 2007

For More Information:
Elaine Watkins-Miller, 515-281-5651
elaine.watkins-miller@iowa.gov

Iowa Tied for Second Place in the Nation for the Highest Average ACT Composite Score *Average scores continue to rise for Iowa's racial and ethnic groups*

DES MOINES, Iowa – The average ACT score for Iowa students rose 0.2 percentage points this year, for an average composite score of 22.3. Iowa and Wisconsin have the same score and are tied for second place for the highest average composite score for states testing 50 percent or more graduating seniors. Minnesota is first with 22.5. The national average score for the college admission and placement exam is 21.2 out of a possible 36.

While Iowa's average composite score increased, the number of students taking the test also increased. Last year, 22,233 students took the test, which is 65 percent of the 2006 graduating class. This year, 23,016 students took the test, which is 66 percent of the 2007 graduating class.

Iowa also made gains by ethnic and racial groups. While still below the state average, the composite score for African-American students rose 0.2 percentage points to 18.5. The national average for African-American students is 17.0. The average composite score for Hispanic students in Iowa increased 0.3 percentage points to 20.1. The national average for Hispanic students is 18.7. In Iowa, the composite score for Caucasian students went from 22.3 to 22.4 and for Asian-American students it went from 22.2 to 22.7. This year's composite score for American Indian stayed the same at 20.5.

"Iowans can be very pleased with the increase in the state's average composite score on the ACT and the gains made by our minority students," said Governor Chet Culver. "Statewide tests, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Iowa Test of Educational Development, also show that efforts to reduce the achievement gap are working. There is still more to do, however, and I am committed to building on our efforts to provide all Iowa students the opportunity for a bright future."

Iowa and National Average ACT Composite Scores by Race/Ethnicity, 5-Year Trends

		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
All Students	State	22.0	22.0	22.0	22.1	22.3
	National	20.8	20.9	20.9	21.1	21.2
African Am./Black	State	17.5	18.5	17.9	18.3	18.5
	National	16.9	17.1	17.0	17.1	17.0
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	State	19.6	19.1	19.9	20.5	20.5
	National	18.7	18.8	18.7	18.8	18.9
Caucasian Am./White	State	22.1	22.1	22.2	22.3	22.4
	National	21.7	21.8	21.9	22.0	22.1
Hispanic	State	19.8	19.4	20.0	19.8	20.1
	National	18.5	18.5	18.6	18.6	18.7
Asian Am./Pacific Islander	State	21.7	22.1	21.9	22.2	22.7
	National	21.8	21.9	22.1	22.3	22.6
Other/No Response	State	22.1	22.2	22.1	22.0	22.4
	National	20.6	20.9	20.9	21.1	21.6

Note: A "." means an insufficient number of students in that category took the ACT.

ACT results show that students who take at least three years each of math, science and social studies and four years of English in high school perform better on the test (23.1 for Iowa and 22.0 nationwide) than those who took lighter loads in core areas (20.6 for Iowa and 19.8 nationwide).

Starting with this year's ninth graders, Iowa students must take at least four years of English and three years each of math, science and social science. In addition, Iowa provides a core curriculum to districts that defines the skills and knowledge students must obtain and helps districts ensure courses are challenging and meaningful to students.

"We must continue to encourage Iowa's students to take their high school course work very seriously," Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey said. "High school students should pursue rigorous courses to successfully prepare for college or other postsecondary experiences."

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test designed to measure the skills and knowledge that are taught in schools and deemed important for first-year college students to possess. The ACT is made up of four separate exams in English, reading, mathematics and science, plus an optional writing test. The ACT is administered in all 50 states.

The Iowa Department of Education works with the State of Iowa Board of Education to provide oversight, supervision and support for the state education system, which includes public elementary and secondary schools, nonpublic schools that receive state accreditation, area education agencies, community colleges and teacher preparation programs. The department is committed to high levels of learning, achievement and performance for all students, so they will become successful members of their community and the workforce.

###